

putable, hereafter, to contribute for such a purpose.

He had risen merely to vindicate himself from the suspicion that he could have presumed to believe, that such a state of things as was represented to him, really existed. It was not for him, at this time, to bring forward any proposition on the subject, until that now under consideration is disposed of. He repeated that he made no charges against the State. If she had been libelled, it was by her own children.

Mr. SOLLERS said it was not his wish or intention to make the slightest attack on the personal character of the gentleman from Cecil. But he appealed to those around him, whether the effect of the speech of that gentleman, was not to impress a conviction on the public mind, that there was great corruption in the State. It was true he had said he did not believe it. But the gentleman drew a picture of existing frauds, calculated to strike with dismay every man in the State. If the gentleman from Cecil did not endorse these frauds, why this lengthened argument, and the reference to the fate of Greece and Rome. He must have supposed there was some truth in them; for he would scarcely have erected so magnificent a superstructure from materials furnished by fancy.

Mr. BRENT, of Charles, remarked that the principle involved in the question now before the committee was regarded as one of very high importance. It had already been very ably and eloquently discussed (as he had learned upon his return to Annapolis yesterday,) and the subject was perhaps at this advanced stage of the debate, worn somewhat "thread-bare." He wished, however, to assign in as concise a manner as possible, some of the reasons which would influence his vote, and asked the indulgence of the committee to enable him to do so.

The right of suffrage, as had been truly said, was a right dear to the freeman. It was a jewel of great value, and the greater its value the more careful we should be in properly guarding and protecting it by wholesome restrictions.

Our power to restrict the right, it seemed to him with due deference to others, was clear and undoubted. He referred to the Constitutions of the several States to show this power had been exercised and admitted from the period of the Revolution up to the present time. The first restrictions upon this right in Maryland were imposed under the Proprietary Government in 1681, and these were continued in the Constitution of 1776. In 1802 the restriction of property qualification was very properly abolished. The prohibition upon the exercise of the right of voting until the voter shall have attained the age of twenty-one years, shall have resided in the State twelve months, and in the county or city, where he may offer to vote, six months, is undoubtedly a restriction. It has been a part of the Constitution of the State since 1810, and has been engrafted already, by a large majority, upon the one, which this Convention has now in charge. The power, therefore, to restrict this right of suffrage must be conceded.

Possessing then the power to restrict, the

question becomes one solely of expediency. In the formation of an organic law the rights of the citizen should be carefully guarded and protected. To guard the right of suffrage against fraud and protect it in its purity, is one of our first duties—for the channel through which the sovereign will of the people is uttered, should be pure and unpolluted.

It is true there is no specified period of residence in an election district required under the present Constitution of the State. A residence there in good faith, no matter how recent, entitles the person claiming it to vote, if he has resided in the State and county or city for the length of time designated in the provision adopted in 1810. Prior to 1841 no reason existed for such a provision. Until 1799 all elections were held at the county towns. The election district system was then established for the "better convenience of the people." Still there was no division of counties for separate elections—except in one or two instances for local officers—until after the census of 1840—when in laying off Congressional districts upon the basis of representation in Congress then adopted, it became necessary and proper for the Legislature of the State to divide Baltimore city and Anne Arundel county. By the division thus made, parts of that county and city were attached to different congressional districts. Here then, in this division by ideal lines in the same county and city exists the temptation to fraud upon the Elective Franchise by double voting, and the system of "colonizing," of which so much has been said in the course of this discussion. In the progress of time, as the basis of representation in Congress is again changed, divisions of other counties in the State may also become necessary and proper. A new feature in the division of the State has thus sprung up. Different election districts in the same county are called upon to vote for and elect different members to Congress—and hence the importance of now requiring a fixed period of residence in each particular election district. The amendment proposes five days residence, and he desired to see it adopted.

He proceeded to refer to the remarks made by the gentleman from Queen Anne, (Mr. SPENCER) yesterday, in which he understood him as intimating that the restriction proposed would be oppressive only to the man in poor and humble life.

Mr. SPENCER explained. He admitted that the Convention had the right to impose restrictions, and that the only question was one of expediency. He had said that the restriction would be particularly hard on the humble. He disavowed any intention of charging such a motive on any one.

Mr. BRENT resumed. He had not understood the gentleman as denying the power of the Convention to impose restrictions. He had, however, misunderstood him in reference to the effect of the proposition under discussion. He now understands him as having said that this measure would operate with peculiar hardship on the humble. He (Mr. B.) did not think so. It was a measure designed for the wise purpose of